

Academic engagement and lobbying

In 2016, the Scottish Parliament passed the [Lobbying \(Scotland\) Act](#), which is designed to bring about greater openness and transparency about the face-to-face lobbying of MSPs, Ministers and certain Government officials.

Under the act, face-to-face oral communication with any of the following people, when discussing Scottish Government or parliamentary functions, may count as “regulated lobbying”:

- a member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP);
- a member of the Scottish Government (Cabinet Secretaries and Scottish Law Officers);
- a junior Scottish Minister;
- a Scottish Government Special Adviser; or
- the Scottish Government’s Permanent Secretary (aside from Special Advisers, the only civil servant covered by regulated lobbying within the Act).

Unless certain exemptions apply, such lobbying will require to be recorded by the individual or organisation doing the lobbying (not the MSP or official) in the publicly accessible Lobbying Register.

Although it is for each individual to consider whether they engage in regulated lobbying, it is worth noting that, as the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) manages a programme of academic engagement opportunities and events, SPICe invites the contributions of participants to such events and is therefore making requests for factual information or views on behalf of the Parliament.

Communication during the structured parts of SPICe events such as SPICe Seminars and meetings of the Scottish Parliament Academia Network (SPAN) meetings is therefore likely to fall under the category of “Communication made on request”. This recognises that individuals will wish, for example, to engage over policy matters to further their own understanding of issues or to seek advice. The Act does not aim to regulate this type of activity nor place a responsibility on any individual or organisation assisting in this way. Any such communication is exempt from registration as regulated lobbying.

There is a distinction to be drawn with informal communications that take place at the edges of the event – in a lunch or coffee break, for example. Such communications may count as regulated lobbying and should be registered as such.

For more information, please feel free to contact the Lobbying Register Team via lobbying@parliament.scot or read their [Lobbying Information booklet](#)